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MEMORANDUM: Gromyko's Talks with Secretary Rusk and Lord Home

1. Gromyko's remarks in the private talks in New York disclosed no change in Soviet positions on major East-West issues. They seemed to reflect, however, a desire to maintain the detente atmosphere by moving toward further agreements with the West on questions of secondary importance.
2. We believe that the dominant factor now shaping Soviet foreign policy is this desire to avoid major crisis situations with the West while dealing with the increasingly bitter and damaging struggle with the Chinese Communists for leadership of the Communist movement. The serious economic problems facing the Soviet leaders probably have also strengthened their interest in a general improvement in relations with the West as a means of insuring access to Western markets. In Ambassador Kohler's judgment, the Soviets have a major crisis on their hands with the Chinese and do not want an active cold war on two fronts.
3. Berlin and Germany Gromyko's comments on this central problem were designed primarily to probe the US position and to convey Moscow's interest in further exchanges. His pro forma repetition of familiar positions on Berlin and a German peace treaty contained no hints of unilateral action to aggravate the situation. Gromyko contended that US-Soviet talks last year had brought the two sides very close to agreement on many points and that the question of the status of Western forces in West Berlin had been the main stumbling block. He expressed interest in US views on interim arrangements for West Berlin and tried to draw Secretary Rusk out on his suggestion for taking a "fresh look" at the problem.
4. Nonaggression pact Gromyko again warned that Western insistence on including security guarantees for West Berlin as part of a nonaggression treaty would "drown" the entire question in the very broad and difficult problems of Germany and Berlin. He attempted, however, to sidestep this issue of guarantees

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by asserting that a nonaggression pact would provide for peaceful settlement of all questions without exception.

5. Non-dissemination of nuclear weapons Gromyko repeated that Western plans for a multilateral NATO nuclear force (MLF) constitute a serious obstacle to agreement. He agreed that the three powers have a mutual interest in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons but urged the US and Britain to shelve the MLF and proceed with a sweeping prohibition on the transfer of weapons. Gromyko argued that such an agreement would be the best way of dealing with the problem which Rusk contends the MLF is designed to resolve.

6. Observation Posts Gromyko continued to link his proposal for observation posts to prevent surprise attack with other "practical matters" such as a reduction of forces and a denuclearized zone in the two German states.

7. Reduction of military budgets Gromyko pressed his proposal for a simple percentage reduction of military budgets and argued that Western stress on the need for inspection and verification of budgets would "hopelessly complicate" this problem. He showed no interest in Rusk's suggestion for mutual destruction of certain weapons, such as medium bombers.

8. Disarmament Gromyko took a gloomy view, saying the general state of this problem "could not be worse." He charged the West with not approaching disarmament seriously. Gromyko said the Soviet Government sometimes wondered whether the Geneva talks were worth continuing, but he added that this should not be taken to mean that the USSR intended to withdraw from the Geneva talks.

9. Laos Gromyko repeated the line he and Khrushchev had taken with Secretary Rusk and Governor Harriman in August. In response to Rusk's question whether a way could be found to exert pressure on Hanoi to withdraw North Vietnamese troops from Laos, Gromyko claimed the USSR had no special influence in Hanoi. He added that, according to his information, there were no North Vietnamese military personnel in Laos. Gromyko agreed that all concerned should work to prevent a renewal of fighting, but contended that the main problem was the "regrettable inability" of the Laotians to settle their own problems.

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